

Two from wing selected for brand new AF unit

Two RAF Lakenheath members have been selected to be part of the 820th Security Forces Group, the first force protection unit of its kind in the Air Force.

MSgt. Tony Legg and TSgt. Rick Parsons, both from the 48th Security Police Squadron, were selected to work at the group headquarters at Lackland AFB, Texas.

The 820th will provide a highly-trained, rapidly-deployable "first-in" force protection capable of deploying to any operating location.

"The 820th gives the Air Force a totally dedicated composite unit for force protection, drawing from many disciplines, not just security forces," said Brig. Gen. Richard A. Coleman, director of Security Forces, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.

"It is the first time a composite unit has been built that solely focuses on security and force protection," said Lt. Col. Larry Buckingham, 820th commander. The unit is composed of personnel from security forces, Office of Special Investigations, civil engineering, logistics and supply, communications, intelligence, administration, personnel, and medical career fields, "giving us the capability to assess each threat and act accordingly," Buckingham said.

"I'm really looking forward to working di-

rectly with people from the other career fields," said Parsons. "I'm sure it will give me a better picture of the whole Air Force concept and what other people do."

While the activation of an organization itself isn't new to the Air Force, there are a few things that make the 820th stand out. Mindset is one thing.

"We're shooters first," said Capt. Don Derry, S-3, 820th operations officer. "Everyone will be trained in all combat operations to defend our assets," he said. Once the group secures an area, "they'll slip into their specialties," Derry said.

This mindset, however, shouldn't lead anyone to believe the group is Special Operations. They're "purely for force protection," according to Buckingham.

"We'll be looking at all threats" he said, "from medical needs and what's in the water to the local population and whether or not they want us there. We're looking at the whole environment, not just the 'bad guys.'"

While this unit isn't the Air Force's equivalent of the U.S. Army Rangers, it appears as if a

background in that arena is helpful. The commander and a number of his staff, including Parsons, have served as special forces and rangers. Some have also served as exchange students with an RAF Regiment, where a stint begins with a six-month infantry school.

Although a resume in weapons, sensors and communications may be helpful, members aren't required to arrive fully trained. All personnel will attend just about any school they can get their hands on, according to Coleman. "I had to whittle down my wish list," he said with a chuckle, "or else nobody would get a day off."

The few who would contemplate joining the 820th should be warned: this is no picnic. When the forces are at Lackland, their days will begin with three hours of physical training.

While this would be a couch potato's nightmare, the number of days each member will spend on the road won't be conducive to a sedentary lifestyle either. Buckingham anticipates each person will spend between 120 to 180 days on the road annually.

"It's really a great opportunity to be part of this new program," said Legg. "At the headquarters we'll be responsible for setting up all-new training pro-

"We'll be charting new ground and doing it with some of the best people in the Air Force."

MSgt. Tony Legg



grams to ensure members of the group are prepared to set up an operating location. We'll be charting new ground and doing it with some of the best people in the Air Force."

"Anyone below the top one percent in the Air Force isn't coming here," Buckingham said.

The 820th has yet to receive all its assets and the various flights around the states won't be complete until October. That first week in October will see all flights, a total of about 440 people, together at Fort Polk, La., for a joint exercise, according to Buckingham. There the Air Force will train with the Army, and possibly the Marines, and will be under the operational control of the Army's 82nd Airborne, according to the 820th commander.

While the joint exercise or even daily operations of the force protection group won't be for the weak at heart, the 820th personnel have a different view. In unison, Buckingham and Derry both say that the activation of this force "is a dream come true." (Story compiled from local and AFNS sources).

"I'm really looking forward to working directly with people from the other career fields."

SSgt. Rick Parsons



Lakenheath sponsors EIC rifle match

The 48th Security Police Squadron combat arms training and maintenance staff sponsors an Elementary Level Excellence in Competition rifle match May 3 at the combat arms training center at RAFFeltwell.

The competition is open to all U.S. active-duty, National guard, and Reserve members who have not already earned credits toward the Distinguished Rifle Shot Badge.

"This is only the second time Lakenheath has sponsored this type of match," said MSgt. Tony Legg, 48th Security Police Squadron. "In the previous match we had competitors from all over the U.K. and

Europe representing Air Force, Army and Navy active-duty, Guard and Reserve units."

During the match, competitors will have 10 rounds to zero their weapons and will then fire 50 rounds from four positions at a "reduced" target at 25 yards. Maximum score is 500.

To earn a bronze Excellence in Competition medal and four points toward Distinguished Rifle Shot Badge, shooters must be in the top 10 percent of all shooters in the match and score a 455 or better.

"We have 192 slots available for competitors," said Legg. "This will allow us to authorize 19 medals if we fill all shooting positions."

Those who earn medals will receive them from the Air Force with their name and date earned engraved on back. The medals are authorized for wear in uniform.

"I'm optimistic that this year's competition will be highly successful and the start of an annual competition at Lakenheath," said Legg. "Our ultimate objective is to give people an incentive to become proficient in a military skill, have some fun and a little friendly competition."

Registration begins Monday and is on a first-come, first-served basis.

To sign up, call Ext. 7066 or 7026.